THE

WONDERFUL TESTIMONIES.

A Sermon

PREACHED AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE PHILADELPHIA BIBLE SOCIETY, ON THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 14TH, 1862.

BY

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Adoro Scripturæ plenitudinem.—*Tertullian Adv. Herm. c.* 22.

Ama Scripturas sanctas, et amabit te sapientia.—*Jerome Ad Demetr.*

In accordance with a resolution of the Philadelphia Bible Society, the undersigned respectfully and urgently request a copy of the eloquent sermon preached at the anniversary of the Society in December last, believing that its publication would greatly conduce to the advancement of the Bible cause in our city and elsewhere.

[*Signed,*] Chas. B. Durborow,
Thomas Cooper,
Samuel Sappington,
T. L. Schrack,
Committee.

Philadelphia, Jan. 30, 1863.

The Law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul:
The Testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The Statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:
The Commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The Fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever:
The Judgments of the LORD are truth, and righteous altogether.

More precious are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the drops from the honey-combs.

Moreover by them is Thy servant enlightened:
And in keeping of them there is great reward.

Ps. xix. 8-12. *A Psalm of David.*

THE

Wonderful Testimonies.

A SERMON.

"Thy testimonies are wonderful."—PSALM cxix. 129.

THE Psalmist here addresses himself to God. The testimonies of which he speaks are God's testimonies. As collected and arranged in one book, they are known to us as *The Bible.** For the contents of these holy oracles the royal singer expresses his admiration. He pronounces them "wonderful."

It was not an unworthy theme with which he was occupied at the time, neither was it an extravagant opinion which he uttered. It is impossible that there should be for man a more important subject than the communications made to him from his God. And if ever there was a marvellous thing submitted to human inspection, it is this book, the Holy Bible. It lies before us like an ocean, boundless and un-

* The collected books of the Old and New Testaments first began to be called by this name about the fifth century. It was the work of the Reformers, Wickliffe, Luther, and those who followed them, to fix this now univocal designation to these writings.

fathomable,—like a Himalayan mountain, whose summit no foot of man has trod, and whose foundation is in the undiscovered heart of the world. To make a full survey of it is not possible in the present condition of the human faculties. Even the inspired Paul, when he came to look into it, found himself gazing into profundities at which he could do no more than exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" And yet there are many beautiful shells and pebbles lying on the shore of this sea, and as many precious flowers blooming on this mountain's side, which any one may gather, and which, whosoever attentively contemplates, must feel himself impelled to join the admiring exclamation, "*The testimonies of the Lord are wonderful.*"

Let us look briefly at a few particulars by which to verify this declaration, praying that God may open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of his Law.

I. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL IN AGE AND PRESERVATION.

The Bible is the oldest of books. Some portions of it are much more recent than others, but a large part of it has come down from the remotest antiquity and antedates all other writings in the world. It contains a journal of events which transpired centuries before the building of the Pyramids. The book of Job existed before Cadmus carried letters into Greece. The five books of Moses were read in

holy assemblies two hundred years before Sanchoniathon wrote.* David and Solomon had uttered their sacred songs and prophecies half a century before Homer enraptured the Greeks with his verses or Lycurgus had given laws to Lacedæmon. Dozens of the books of Scripture were complete a hundred years before the first public library was founded at Athens; and the last of the prophets had ended his message before Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had propounded their philosophies. When the elements of society were but forming in the womb of the far-distant past, the Bible was there. When the foundations of earth's present greatness were laid, it was there. And when we go back to the very beginnings of history, even there does its hand lead us and its right hand uphold us.

Nor is it as a mere lifeless fossil that this book has come down to us from such remote antiquity. Though hoary with age, its youthful vigor remains, and its natural force is not abated. It has only grown fresher with age, and strengthened with every new trial. It has been at the births and deaths of a hundred mighty nations, and seen em-

* "The Pentateuch: a record sacred in every sense; ever and for evermore the subject of reverential affection to the believer, as being the foundation of all literature, the *origines* of all authentic history, the shrine of the primeval revelation, the register of the eternal covenant of grace, and the panorama of those sacrosanct emblems which shadow out the Redeeming Work accomplished in the fulness of time by Him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets did write."—*Etheridge on the Targums*, p. 8.

pires rise, flourish, and fall, and coexisted with the longest lines of earthly kings, and beheld some of the sublimest monuments of human effort come forth and disappear, and passed a hundred generations in reaching us; but, withal, it still lives, in all nations, in all languages, the most precious legacy of departed ages, and the only thing that remains to us from some of them. Though it has encountered many a fierce conflict with the hate of men and the spite of devils,—though the object of many a concerted scheme to blot it from the earth,—though often held up to ridicule, with "gigantic apes, like Voltaire, chattering at it, men of genius turned by some Circean spell into swine, like Mirabeau and Paine, casting filth at it, demoniacs whom it had half rescued and half inspired, like Rousseau, making mouths in its face," and all the varied passions of unsanctified men continually arrayed against it,—it still holds its place as the most uncorrupt and authentic of histories, the most august and controlling of records, the most universal, venerable, and potent of books, imaging in its very history the stupendous majesty of the God whom it reveals.

II. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL IN THEIR AUTHORSHIP.

They are not of man, but of God. We cannot now refer to the varied and multitudinous considerations which enter into the proofs of this. It is capable, however, of being established by the very highest moral evidences. The wisest and best men of every age

have concurred in receiving the Scriptures as from God. And it is not possible to give a rational account of their origin, and the source of their contents, without ascribing them to the divine authorship which they claim.

> Whence, but from Heaven, could men unskill'd in arts,
> In several ages born, in several parts,
> Weave such agreeing truths? Or how, or why,
> Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
> Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,
> Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price!

It may seem strange that the infinite God should condescend to put his great thoughts into the poor language of mortals, to communicate with creatures so dull and stupid as the sons of men; but this he has done. Portions of the Scriptures are made up of the very words of God, articulated by himself in the hearing of men commissioned to declare them. One chapter, which embodies the moral essence of all the rest, was engraven by his own finger upon tables of rock, and delivered to Moses all ready formed and set in the alphabetic signs employed by men. Other parts consist of communications of celestial messengers sent directly from heaven's throne to declare God's will and purposes to the dwellers upon earth. A still larger portion was taken down as it fell from the lips of One in whom God had incarnated himself, and whose every word and act in this world was a revelation from the unknown Deity. Even those parts which were written by

men were produced by a mysterious motion and illumination of the Holy Ghost,—by inspiration of God. Indeed, the whole book is a literary aerolite, all the characteristics of which are unearthly, and whose own superior attributes are so many demonstrations of its superhuman source. Its very address is so far above that of man, that no mortal, unprompted, could ever have risen to it. Its subjects are all treated after an unearthly manner. Every leaf of it bears the sunlight of some higher sphere. Every page has on it the imprimatur of God. And all its words are instinct with divine fires, flashing the admonition upon every reader, "*Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*" They that look upon it look upon expressions of the Eternal Spirit. They that rightly take its lessons drink in living emanations from unsearchable Godhead. It is the abiding miracle of *rapport* with the Mind which projected, upholds, and governs the universe. IT IS THE WORD OF GOD.

III. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL IN THEIR ORIGINALITY AND INSTRUCTIVENESS.

The Bible depends upon no discoveries of man, and leans upon no other books. If it says some things which may be learned elsewhere, its utterances are always independent and peculiarly its own. The world through which it ranges is much wider than that of man's thoughts. It goes back to a remoter antiquity; it takes in a broader space; it

extends to a vaster future; it introduces to sublimer spheres and forms of being; and it exhibits a much profounder wisdom. It opens arcana of which no earthly powers ever dreamed, and is at home in regions where the sublimest imaginings of man had hardly extended a guess. On all the great questions of theology, life, death, and futurity, it speaks with a familiarity, comprehensiveness, and propriety which at once command our confidence and satisfy our hearts. What it touches, it touches with a master's hand. It never speaks without pregnant meaning in all its words. And there is nothing in human science, poetry, or tradition which it does not exceed in knowledge, wisdom, and real value.*

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* "The sacred books of infidel nations—the Zendavesta of the Persees, the Vidam of the Brahmins, the Koran of the Turks, the Edda of the Scandinavians, the Maxims of Confucius, the Sanscrit poems—excite in us no surprise. We find in these works the ordinary chain of human ideas; they have all some resemblance to each other, both in tone and thought. The Bible alone is like none of them; it is a monument detached from all the others. Explain it to a Tartar, to a Caffre, to an American savage, put it into the hands of a bonze or a dervise; they will be all equally astonished by it,—a fact which borders on the miraculous. Twenty authors, living at periods very distant from one another, composed the sacred books; and though they are all written in twenty different styles, yet these styles, equally inimitable, are not to be met with in any other performance."—*Chateaubriand.*

"If you have ever tried it, you must have been struck with the few solid thoughts, the few suggestive ideas, which survive the perusal of the most brilliant of human books. Few of them can stand three readings; and of the memorabilia which you

In the department of law and morals its pre-eminence is undisputed. Said a skeptic, distinguished for his legal talents and knowledge, "I have been looking into the nature of that Law which Moses gave to the Israelites. I have been trying to see whether I can add any thing to it, or take any thing from it, so as to make it better. Sir, I cannot. IT IS PERFECT."

In its account of the creation, and the origin of things, there is nothing to compare with it. In all

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had marked in your first reading, on reverting to them, you find that many of those were not so striking, or weighty, or original as you thought. But the word of God is solid; it will stand a thousand readings; and the man who has gone over it the most frequently and carefully is the surest of finding new wonders there."—*Rev. James Hamilton.*

"When I commenced my duties of professor of theology, I feared that the frequency with which I should have to pass over the same portion of Scripture would abate the interest in my own mind in reading them; but, after more than fifty years of study, it is my experience that with every class my interest increases."—*Prof. Leonard Woods.*

"There is a richness of conception, a universality of spirit, a range and amplitude of thought, a power of illustration, a truthfulness to nature, an insight into character, a familiarity with the unseen and eternal, a fund of information, a variety of incident, and a consciousness of authority in all its utterances, which give to all the words and images of the Bible the charm of originality, the impress of genius, and the force of an endless life."—*Dr. Le Roy Halsey.*

"We account the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy."—*Sir Isaac Newton.*

"The Pentateuch, and the books of Joshua and Judges, are a thousand times more instructive than Homer and Heredotus."—*Voltaire.*

the historians, philosophers, and secular authors,—the books of Zoroaster, the records of Phœnicia and Egypt, the Dialogues of Plato and Lucian, the annals of China, the treatises of Plutarch, the Shasters of India, the Edda of Scandinavia, and all the schemes that have ever been given in explanation of the earth's primal history,—there is nothing so natural, so magnificent, so simple, so appropriate, so reliable, so satisfactory, as the first chapter of Genesis. Nor have all the discoveries of modern geology brought forward any thing to convict Moses of a false cosmogony. If it is a truth that the history of the earth's formation runs back through uncounted ages, he leaves an interval for it, between "the beginning" and the period when God caused light to appear upon its dark and misty surface. If it is true that vast eras have been traversed by each separate order of living things, one after the other, we find precisely the same succession in the Mosaic account which is found preserved in the different layers of the earth's crust. And if it be true that there was life upon our world ages and cycles of ages before the period noted in Genesis as that in which man was created, it is also true that no traces of human existence are found except in the most recent deposits. A certain stonemason of the village of Cromartie,* with sledge and chisel, himself delved through every formation, from the surface-mould down through the old red sandstone to the Silurian, gneiss, and granite, and, having

* Hugh Miller.

mastered all that is known concerning each, has written it down as the result of his marvellous explorations, that the truthfulness of the Mosaic record is engraven upon the rocks forever.*

And so in every department of science the Bible is always true to nature, and has invariably been in advance of all human investigations and discoveries. How many thousands of years have metaphysicians and psychologists been at work to map out, classify, and gauge the various capacities and powers of the human mind and soul! But they have found no way of approach to the heart so masterly and effective as that taken by the Scriptures; and the more that is known of the nature of man, the more clearly is it seen that the Bible comprehended it from the commencement. It has been but a few years since Newton laid open the laws of gravitation; and yet the Scriptures spoke of the earth being hung "upon nothing," as if familiar with the whole subject, before human science had begun to form even its feeblest guesses in the case. It has only been since the invention of the telescope enabled men to search through the starry spaces that Sir John Herschel has discovered in the northern sky a peculiar barrenness; but more than three thousand years ago Job told Bildad the Shuhite that "*God stretcheth out the*

* See also Dr. Dana's *Manual of Geology*, pp. 743–746, who remarks that "the record of the Bible is profoundly philosophical in the scheme of creation which it presents. It is both true and divine. It is a declaration of authorship, both of creation and the Bible, on the first page of the sacred volume."

north over the empty place."* It has been but a few years since science discovered "that the sun is not the dead centre of motion, around which comets sweep and planets whirl," but that "the earth and sun, with their splendid retinue of comets, satellites, and planets, are all in motion around some point or centre of attraction inconceivably remote, and that that point is in the direction of the star Alcyone, one of the Pleiades;" which would hence seem to be "the midnight throne" in which the whole system of gravitation has its central seat and from which all material orbs are governed. But the Bible asked the question, more than thirty centuries ago, "*Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?*"† as if the speaker knew all about the facts in the case. How long has it been since the doctrine of the rotundity of the earth has been settled by scientific men? yet the Psalmist spoke of "the round world;"‡ and Solomon described in brief the true theory of wind-currents,§ and strongly hinted the circulation of the blood,‖ at least twenty-five hundred years ago. And, with all the advances of knowledge which have so wonderfully marked the last three hundred years, in which the spirit of philosophic inquiry has ranged the universe, searched heaven, earth, and sea, knocked at every door, peered into every recess, consulted every oracle of nature, and gathered trophies of

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* Job xxvi. 7. † Job xxxviii. 31.
‡ Ps. xviii. 15, Prayer-Book version.
§ Eccles. i. 6. ‖ Eccles. xii. 6.

power and treasures of wisdom and sublimities of knowledge at which the world has been amazed,—in all the motions which the experimentist has traced, in all the principles of power which the master of physics has discovered, in all the combinations which the chemist has detected, in all the forms which the naturalist has recorded, in all the spiritual phenomena which the metaphysician has described, and in all the conditions and relations of mind or matter, past or present, which human research has found out,—there has not come to light one truth to contradict these holy records, or to require the relinquishment or change of one word in all the great volume of Scripture. Mistranslations and false interpretations have had to be abandoned; but its original terms have never failed to accord with every new discovery. Not all the new worlds of knowledge laid open in the heights or depths, in land, or sea, or stars, have for one moment surprised it or cast the least real confusion into its utterances. The science of all other ancient books has long since become obsolete, and all other records have had again and again to be modified and changed; but the Bible, which was before them all, remains the same, and has maintained itself with the wisdom of every generation, as if full master of the whole universe of truth from the very beginning.*

* "The Bible frequently makes allusions to the laws of nature, their operation and effects. But such allusions are often so wrapped in the folds of the peculiar and graceful drapery with which its language is occasionally clothed, that the meaning,

IV. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL IN BEAUTY AND LITERARY EXCELLENCE.

The Bible is a casket of jewelry of the richest hues and the most exquisite workmanship. Sir William Jones, that great Orientalist and scholar, has said, "I have regularly and attentively perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of the opinion that this volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written." Even Rousseau wrote, "The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration. The works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible, in comparison with them!*"

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though peeping out from its thin covering all the while, yet lies in some sense concealed, until the lights and revelations of science are thrown upon it: then it bursts out and strikes us with exquisite force and beauty."—*Lieut. Maury's Geography of the Sea*, p. 79.

* *Dr. D. Hartley* says, "No writers, from the invention of letters to the present time, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Testaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity."

Picus Mirandola.—"I rest in the Bible as the only book in which is found true eloquence and wisdom."

Fisher Ames.—"I will hazard the assertion, that no man ever did, or ever will, become truly eloquent, without being a constant reader of the Bible, and an admirer of the purity and sublimity of its language."

Bishop Lowth.—"What can the human mind conceive more

Nor does it matter much what part of the Scriptures we take, or in what department of rhetoric we test them. Whether it be history or prophecy, the Old Testament or the New, narrative or description, comparison or sublimity, poetry or prose, the same characteristics are to be seen. Moses is as

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grand, more noble, or more animated—what is there more beautiful or interesting—than the sacred writings of the Hebrew prophets? They equal," says he, "the almost inexpressible greatness of the subjects by the splendor of their diction and the majesty of their poetry; and, as some of them are of higher antiquity than even the fables of the Greeks, so they excel the Greek compositions as much in sublimity as in age."

John Milton.—"There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, or orations equal to those of the prophets."

Archbishop Fenélon.—"The Scripture surpasses the most ancient Greek authors vastly in native simplicity, loveliness, and grandeur. Homer himself never reached the sublimity of Moses' songs. Never did any ode, either Greek or Latin, come up to the loftiness of the Psalms. Neither Homer nor any other great poet equalled Isaiah, describing the majesty of God. What is there in antiquity that can be compared to the lamentations of Jeremiah, when he tenderly deplores the misery of his country, or the prophecy of Nahum, when he foresees in the spirit the proud Nineveh fall under the rage of an invisible army? Every thing is painted in such a lively manner as strikes the imagination: the prophet far outdoes Homer. Read likewise Daniel denouncing to Belshazzar the divine vengeance ready to overwhelm him, and try if you can find any thing in the most sublime original of antiquity that can be compared to those passages of Sacred Writ. As for the rest of Scripture, every portion of it is uniform and constant; every part bears the peculiar character that becomes it. In short, there is as much difference between the heathen poet and the prophets as there is between a false enthusiasm and the true."

pure and simple as Adam and Eve in Paradise, and yet as majestic and grand as that great creation which he describes. Job contains a drama which is without a parallel,—a drama of facts, in which heaven and earth, visible and invisible, with all their wonderful interpenetrations, are set out in their connection with a suffering saint upon his couch, and in which the spirit of earnest inquiry urges itself forward until every thing comes forth to declare the majesty of God, and all the might and goodness of man lie prostrate before Him who "bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season" and speaketh comfortably to them that trust in him. Under the leadership of David's muse, we pass through varied scenes of beauty and grandeur,—pastures and glens, still waters and roaring floods, dismal swamps and silent wildernesses, forests crashing with the lightnings of God and tempests that convulse the seas, the smoke and fury of battle and the shoutings of glad multitudes, by dells of lonely sorrow and along the starry archways of the sky,—until at length we take our places in a temple high as heaven and wide as space, with all objects of creation as living worshippers around us, each with its separate hymn of grateful joy, blending in one almighty adoration. Isaiah rises upon us like some "mighty orb of song," whose rays are streaming minstrelsies, that have thrilled upon the hearts of men for seventy generations, and which must needs thrill on, unrivalled in their kind, while earth and time endure. Ezekiel is a very comet of fire, flaming his impetuous way across the heavens,

and, like the living spirits in his own first vision, going and returning as a flash of lightning. And throughout,—the Evangelists with their simple story of Jesus, and Paul in his epistles and orations, and John in his loving letters and Apocalyptic visions,—from the first words, "In the beginning," onward to the last "Amen," we find variety, beauty, pathos, dignity, sweetness, magnificence, and glory, such as are contained in no other compositions. Here are the sublimest heights and the profoundest depths, and all the gradations from the one to the other. From the worm that grovels in the dust, to the leviathan in the foaming deep, and the supreme archangel, and the eternal God; from the hyssop on the wall, to the cedars of Lebanon, and the healing trees which shade life's eternal river; from the pearl-drops which trickle from the mountain-rock, to the noise of dashing torrents, and the wide waters of the deluge; from the glow-worm under the thorn, to the sun in the heavens, and the great Father of Lights; from the lone pilgrim to the triumphing host, and the gathering of the multitude which no man can number; from the deepest sorrows of the lost, to the probation scenes of earth and the seraphic visions of the blest,—there is nothing known to mortals which God hath not brought into requisition to intensify and adorn the precious book which he has given to men. As an eloquent preacher beyond the sea* remarks, "He has filled it with marvellous incident and engaging

* Dr. Hamilton.

history, with sunny pictures from Old-World scenery and affecting anecdotes from patriarchal times. He has replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. It has the gracefulness of high utility; it has the majesty of intrinsic power; it has the charm of its own sanctity: it never labors, never strives, but, instinct with great realities and bent on blessed ends, has all the translucent beauty and unstudied power which you might expect from its lofty object and all-wise Author."*

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* In illustration of the superior beauty and sublimity of the Scriptures as a literary production, we submit a few instances.

Homer's battle of the fabulous deities of paganism is often cited as one of the most magnificent pieces of composition in the world. All nature is there represented in commotion. Jupiter thunders in the heavens; Neptune strikes the earth with his trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains shake; the earth trembles; and Pluto starts from his throne in dread lest the secrets of hell should be laid open to mortals. So Blair describes the elements of the piece. But there is a psalm of David which in every point of awfulness and sublimity greatly exceeds it. Hell had stretched up its dreadful arms and taken hold on God's anointed. The terrified captive looked for help, but there was none. He cried to Him who dwells amid eternal power. God hears the voice of his child, and comes forth to deliver him. The earth trembles and shakes; the foundations of the hills move; the heavens bow themselves under the tread of Omnipotence; smoke and devouring flames burst out from his awful presence; darkness and storms encompass his steps; dense hail-clouds enshroud his majesty; his voice is as thunder; his rebukes are as bolts of lightning; they drive the sea from its channels; they lay open the foundations of the world; the grasp of Hell dissolves before them, and the captive is free!

Some call these Scriptures dull and uninviting;

In the entire round of literature there is not another poem of such dramatic power and perfection as that triumphal song which Isaiah puts into the mouths of the ransomed in his fourteenth chapter. It combines all the elements of sublimity, horror, and exulting, thrilling wonder. A golden city falls. A ruler of nations suddenly dies. The son of the morning drops from his place in the heavens. Hell starts, astonished at his coming. The ghosts of departed heroes rouse up amazed. The shadowy forms of buried kings and men of might look out from the dark crypts of Sheol, and cry, "How art thou fallen!" whilst the earth breaks forth into singing, the fir-trees rejoice, Lebanon waves with gladness, and all succeeding generations lift up their hands in exclamation, "Is this the man that made the earth tremble? Is this he that did shake the kingdoms?"

There is a certain manifestation from the spiritual world, described by Ossian, which is thought to possess the highest excellencies of all uninspired writing. At the call of his son, Trenmor came from the hills. A cloud supported his airy limbs. His robe was of deadly mists. His face was without form, and dark. He sighed among the winds, and then slowly vanished, like a cloud that melts on the sunny mount. But Job describes a similar apparition with far greater intensity. It was in the profound stillness of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man. A fear and trembling seized upon the seer. His very bones did shake. The hairs of his flesh stood up. A spirit was before him,—a formless image. There was silence, and he heard a voice:—"*Shall mortal man be more just than God?*"

There is another paragraph in Ossian, which has been pronounced "the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet." It describes a spirit of heaven descending from the skirt of the blast. The troubled ocean feels his steps as he strides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him, and islands shake their heads on the heaving seas. But how vastly superior is the third of Habakkuk! There GOD comes from the south. He descends from the mountains of Paran. The heavens are covered with his glory, and the earth is full of his praise.

but there is no book in being with so many real at-

The glance of his eye drives asunder the nations. The everlasting mountains are scattered; the perpetual hills bow. The deep utters its voice, and lifts up its hands on high. The sun and the moon stand still in their habitations!

Many have attempted to describe the thunderstorm; but no one has ever succeeded in making such a picture as that which "the sweet singer of Israel" has drawn. The Psalmist is in one of the porches of the temple, looking out over the blue waves of the Mediterranean. The tempest is brewing in the west. It gathers over the distant sea. The deep rumbling of its approach is heard, and the sublime description begins:—"*The voice of the Lord is on the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon the mighty sea. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.*" The storm moves around over the mountains. Its fiery bolts crash among the hills; and the description continues:—"*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them to skip like a calf. The voice of the Lord blazeth forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, and layeth bare the forests. And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.*" The clouds having discharged themselves, the storm abates. But the hills now are flooded. The streams run down on all sides in noisy fury; and the Psalmist continues:—"*The Lord sitteth upon the torrent; yea,* THE LORD SITTETH KING FOREVER."

Was there ever another description like this?

And in the department of the pathetic, touching, and sentimental, the same high superiority of the Scriptures is maintained. Who has ever read the story of Joseph with attention, without being moved to tears? or the trial of Abraham's faith, or the narrative of Naomi and Ruth, or the outpouring of David's grief over the death of Absalom his son, or the psalm of the captivity in Babylon, or the history of Daniel's experiences, or the accounts of the tenderness and tears of Jesus, without feeling that there is in them a depth and power to move and melt, which cannot be surpassed? Even Voltaire says, "We know nothing in either Homer or Herodotus that goes to the heart like Ruth's answer to her mother, i. 16, 17."

tractions. There is no classic equal to it,—no historian like Moses, no poet like Job or Isaiah, no singer like David, no orator like Paul, no character like Jesus, and no revelation of God or nature like that which these venerable pages give. Not without reason has Sir Thomas Browne said, "Were it of man, I could not choose but say it was the singularest and superlative piece that hath been extant since the creation. Were I a pagan, I should not refrain the lecture of it, and cannot but commend the judgment of Ptolemy, that thought not his library complete without it."

V. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL IN THEIR INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS.

The Bible has been, for three thousand years, one of the greatest potencies on earth. It has been, and is to this moment, a greater power than Rome, or Greece, or Babylon ever was. Though it has not conquered the world, it has advanced further towards it than Alexander ever did. It has done more to govern and renew the human heart than all the laws enacted by legislators, and all the maxims devised by uninspired sages, and all the lessons, apart from itself, that were ever given to the race. It is the chief stay of a society which for a thousand years has been the most wide-spread, the most important, and the most powerful association on the earth. It has controlled the religious opinions of a large part of mankind for nearly forty centuries. It has moulded the characters and directed the efforts

of men whose lives and labors introduced new eras and shaped the destinies of nations and turned the course of the world's entire history. It has begotten and fostered the purest virtue, the sublimest manhood, the noblest beneficence, the sincerest charity, the tenderest kindness, and all the blessed saintship, that have ever been upon earth.

Its vast influences upon the welfare of nations may be estimated in part from the bloody codes, and infamous administrations, and social degradations, and far-reaching wretchedness, of those countries where it is rejected or unknown, contrasted with the blessedness and peace of those who have received it. It was the great Milton who said, "There are no politics like those which the Scriptures teach;" and in proof we need only look at Judea when it knew no laws but those which this book contains. How smooth and steady were the wheels of public justice, and how beautiful was the flow of national peace, in those golden days of the old Hebrew commonwealth! How did the joyous vines, and fields of waving ears, and gold of Ophir, and flocks and cattle abiding on a thousand hills, and cities full of peace and plenty, proclaim abroad the wealth and blessedness of that goodly land! How did the voice of singing and the fragrance of virtue linger round each habitation, and the sacrifices of praise crowd all the temple's courts from tribes rejoicing in the smiles of God!

In the sphere of learning and thought-creations, also, the influence of the Bible is equally marked

and wonderful. It is to the world of letters what the sun is to the solar system, the fountain of the purest light and brightest wisdom. It has produced more books than any other one thing in existence. It has fostered learning when there was no other stimulation to its cultivation felt. Even the heathen classics owe their preservation to it. As a book written in other times, places, and languages, it has called forth the most laboriously compiled lexicons, grammars, and works on archæology by which the world of the present communes with the world of the past. As a book claiming the faith and obedience of men, it has created a world of learned apology, comment, and exposition, and some of the noblest specimens of argument, eloquence, and appeal which are known to man. And, simply as a book among books, it has wrought wondrously upon the thoughts and productions of authors of all classes. The Visions of Dante are largely drawn from it. Every canto of the Fairy Queen bears the impress of its influence. Milton's matchless songs of Paradise are from an inspiration which the Bible alone could give. From the same source came the immortal dream of Bunyan, the Pauline reasonings of Barrow, the flaming zeal of Richard Baxter, the "molten wealth" and "lava of gold and gems" which poured down "the russet steep of Puritan theology," the Songs of Cowper, and Thoughts of Young, and Visions of Pollok, and mighty eloquence of the Luthers, the Knoxes, the Massillons, the Whitefields, and the Halls. Addison, and Thomson, and Burke, and

Dryden, and Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and Southey, and Campbell, and Goethe, all are vastly indebted to the Scriptures for whatever excellencies are found in their works. Shakspeare drew largely from this same precious mine, and also even Hobbes, and Shelley, and Byron. That prince of modern orators, Daniel Webster, once said, "If there be any thing in my style or thoughts to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents in instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures." Indeed, if we were to destroy the Bible, and take from the world of literature and thought all that it has contributed directly or indirectly, half the history of the race would be swept out of mind, the noblest ideas that have swelled man's heart would be gone, some of the proudest monuments of human genius would be buried in oblivion, and thick darkness would settle down upon the world forever.

VI. THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL AS A FOUNTAIN OF CONSOLATION, HOPE, AND SALVATION.

The Bible to all its other excellencies adds this, that it is *The Book of Life.* It is not only a basket of silver network, but it contains apples of gold. It is the record of glad tidings to a perishing world, a message of joy to all people. In it, Wisdom hath mingled her wine, and slain her fatlings, and furnished her table, and calls all the hungry and needy to come and partake. The entrance of its words giveth light, and imparteth understanding to the

simple, and maketh wise unto salvation. It is a balm from Gilead for the sick, oil for the bruises of the wounded, reprieve for the prison-bound, and bread for them that are ready to perish. Its different books are but so many angels of mercy, carrying contentment into the abodes of poverty, enabling even the children of want to lift up their eyes to God who ordereth all things well, and to eat their scanty meals in peace,—staying the hearts of the persecuted and oppressed, causing them to rejoice and sing under the yoke, at the stake, and in the hottest of the fires, as on their passage-way to crowns immortal in the world to come,—calming the minds of the fevered, mollifying where all earthly medicines fail, and kindling glad hopes of recompense yet to be revealed,—lighting up comforts in the breasts of those that mourn for their dead, and assuring them of blessed reunions in a better life,—and kindling even the dying eye and inspiring the dying heart with thoughts of speedy triumph, causing lips already closed for death to open once more in utterances of victory.

We may talk of the venerable age of the Bible, and its scientific accuracy, and its literary beauty and sublimity, and its wonderful influences upon the ideas, laws, governments, and general order of society and mankind; but it is all nothing in comparison with the spiritual good and immortal hopes and consolations which it begets in those who receive it as a message from their God. Are we voyagers upon a troubled and a dangerous sea?

Here is a chart by which to steer in safety to the happy shores. Are we soldiers, beset with foes and required to endure the shocks of battle? This is an armory from which all needed weapons may be drawn at will, and by the right use of which we may hew our way to immortal triumph. Are we pilgrims and strangers, worn and weary in our search for the home from which we are exiles? In this book gush out the pure, fresh waters of life, the cooling shades from the Rock of salvation appear, and the guiding word is heard from pilgrims in advance, to cheer and encourage us till we reach the mansion of our Father. Indeed, it is beyond the power of language to express the excellency and richness of spiritual treasure which we have in this Holy Book. It is the miraculous cruse of the Shunamitess which never exhausts. It is the wand of Moses which swallows the serpents of life, and parts the sea of trouble, and brings forth waters in the thirsty wilderness. It is the ladder of Jacob on which our spirits ascend to commune with God and angels. It is the telescope of faith by which we look on things invisible, survey even the third heavens, and have present to our view what is to be in after-ages. It is the chariot of Elijah in which to ride up the starry way to immortality unhurt of death. It is the channel of the Almighty Spirit as it goes forth for the sanctification of the race,—the very gulf-stream of eternal life as it pours out for the resuscitation of our wilted and decaying world.

Most wondrous Book! Bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! Only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of life and gain the coast of bliss
Securely! Only star which rose on Time,
And on its dark and troubled billows still,
As generation, drifting swiftly by,
Succeeded generation, threw a ray
Of heaven's own light, and to the hills of God,
The eternal hills, pointed the sinner's eye!*

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* "The Bible is for the world. The families of man have in it their common genealogical register and the divine charter of their common rights. The great principles of the moral government under which we live are here unfolded: the laws which insure the welfare of our social life, the truth that will correct our errors, the balsam that can heal our wounds, the redemption that has atoned for our guilt and will at last abolish death, have here their sealed revelation."—*Etheridge's Introduction to the Targums*, p. 3.

"Study the Holy Scriptures: therein are contained the words of eternal life. They have God for their author, salvation for their end, and truth without any mixture of error for their matter."—*John Locke.*

"*Other* books may afford us much entertainment and much instruction, may gratify our curiosity, may delight our imagination, may improve our understandings, may calm our passions, may exalt our sentiments, may even improve our hearts; but they have not, they cannot have, that authority in what they affirm and require, in what they promise and threaten, which the Scriptures have. Their denunciations are more awful, their convictions stronger, their consolations more powerful, their counsels more authentic, their warnings more alarming, their expostulations more penetrating."—*Archbishop Secker.*

"If we take The Bible along with us, it is a teacher that will direct us through all the obscurity and maze of things, solve every difficulty, and lead up truth to the fountain-head."—*Ellis.*

Allusion has been made to the dreadful eclipse it would be to the world of letters and thought, for the Bible, and what it has done for man, to be blotted out. But that were nothing to the moral and spiritual night that would go along with such a calamity. Besides carrying away with it a vast proportion of the intellectual and moral life of the last eighteen centuries, it would silence every preacher of salvation, and abolish at once his office and his text. It would stop every work of mercy and plan

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"In the Two Testaments, every word that appertains to God may be sought out and discussed, and from them all knowledge of things may be understood."—*Origen, Hom. V. in Levit.*

"The Canon of Scripture is perfect, and most abundantly sufficient for all things."—*Vincentius Lirinensis, Commen.* c. 2.

"You have the Oracles of God; no one teaches like them."—*Chrysostom, on Col.* iii. 16.

"Many streams meet in the Holy Scriptures,—rivers of sweet and clear waters, and snowy fountains which spring to eternal life."—*Ambrose.*

"The ground of our religion, and the rule of faith, and all saving truth, is the word of God, contained in the Holy Scripture."—*Archbishop Usher.*

"The Sacred Scriptures contain perfectly, fully, and sufficiently, all that is necessary to be known for faith and Christian life, and, hence, for the attainment of life eternal."—*Quenstedt,* I. 102.

"How should we value the Bible as our highest treasure, which infinitely exceeds all the doubtful twilight of nature and our own powers of reasoning! It is this lays a sure foundation for our recovery from all our guilt, and ruin, and wretchedness. Love the Bible, walk by the rules of it, and live upon its promised grace; and I dare pronounce, in the name of God and his Son, that you shall be forever happy."—*Isaac Watts.*

of philanthropy in the world. It would transmute into a lie all our fond anticipations of the return of Jesus to renew the world, restore our dead, complete our salvation, and bring us to an eternal heaven. It would hush forever the glad tidings with which men have comforted themselves for these many weary ages. It would put out the mother's hopes of her dead babes, quench the wife's fond desires for her husband's everlasting peace, destroy the widow's consolation as she lingers by the grave of her buried love, and extinguish the matron's last comfort as she trembles on the verge of eternity. It would take with it all the reliefs and blessedness which prayer in the name of Jesus gives, and leave the sinner without pardon in the extremities of life. It would take away the last appeal of the slave against his oppressor, remove the last check of tyranny, and lift from the wicked hearts of men the last restraints, giving carnival to every lust and play to every passion, without correction, without limit, and without end! We stagger, and are horrified, at the mere idea of the loss that would be inflicted. Chills run down our pulses at the contemplation of the despair and wretchedness which would ensue.

THE TESTIMONIES OF THE LORD ARE WONDERFUL.

Let us, then, learn to value the possession of such a precious book. Let us bind it to our hearts as our chief treasure in this sin-darkened world. And, whilst we admire its beauty and revere its

mysteries, let us abide by its precepts, and, as far as in us lies, practise its sacred mandates. And if ridicule should be heaped upon us, and contumely and scorn become our portion, for our humble faith, we may console ourselves by the contemplation of many blessed spirits who in the same holy cause have toiled, and shone, and suffered. In the goodly fellowship of the saints,—in the noble army of the martyrs,—in the society of the great and good and wise of every nation,—if our sinfulness be not cleansed, and our darkness not illuminated, at least our pretensionless submission may be excused. So, at least, reasoned one of Ireland's most eloquent orators.* And above all is the assurance of the Bible itself, that, thus making it the man of our counsel and the guide to our feet, the time is approaching fast, when these faint and weary heads shall lean upon Jehovah's breast, these weeping eyes gaze undimmed upon the beatitudes of heaven, these pilgrim-feet, oft crippled and journey-worn, tread the streets of gold with the elastic steps of angels, and these throbbing, aching, sorrowing hearts go in to take up their everlasting residence in the palaces of the blessed!

And if the Bible be a book thus freighted with precious wonders of beauty and eternal good, how important that all should have it!—that the poor in their seclusion and lack of earthly comforts, and

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* Charles Phillips, Esq. Speech at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Auxiliary Bible Society, London.

the soldiers in their weary tents and sad hospitals, and all men everywhere, should have the benefit of its light and the consolations of its blessed promises! Oh, it is angelic work, breathing the very spirit of Jesus, to bear these records of glad tidings and seed-grains of heaven to the destitute, and to open these living oracles to the sick, the sorrowing, the desponding, and the lost! And if Heaven could not rest till salvation was provided for mankind, how shall we, who have learned their preciousness, be listless or content whilst our common blood pulsates in so many hearts which have never yet been warmed with a knowledge of the glorious provision!

By the wants, then, that press on all human beings alike, and which the discoveries of this Book alone can relieve;—by the dictates of reason and the impulses of benevolence;—by all the claims of humanity upon its kind, and the example and mandates of God himself;—the obligation is upon the Churches, along with every participant in the hopes and blessings springing from these Holy Testimonies, not only to heed them themselves, but to give them, intelligible and entire, to all the families of man. And happy they who, in the fear and love of God, set themselves to do this work. Earth and heaven are stored with blessings for them. For whosoever shall give to drink a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward.

Sound, sound the truth abroad!
Bear ye the word of God
  Through the wide world:
Tell what our Lord hath done;
Tell how the day was won,
And from his lofty throne
  Satan is hurl'd.

Far over sea and land—
'Tis our Lord's own command—
  Bear ye his name:
Bear it to ev'ry shore;
Regions unknown explore;
Enter at ev'ry door:—
  Silence is shame.

Ye who, forsaking all
At your loved Master's call,
  Comforts resign,
Soon will the work be done;
Soon will the prize be won:
Brighter than yonder sun
  Then shall ye shine.

Dr. SEISS

ON THE

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.

Opinions of the Press.

These sermons are strikingly original and forcible. Among all the productions of the modern pulpit, we have seen few so likely to command attention; and this, not from sensationalism of style, but from vigor of thought. In doctrine they hold to an orthodox, but tolerant, Lutheranism. —*Episcopal Recorder.*

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These sermons are written in Dr. Seiss' usual fluent and graphic style. Without endorsing every point of interpretation, we are decidedly pleased with the book, and believe that much good would result from its general circulation. The discussion of the subject is more thorough than we have yet seen in any other work; and, though a practical vein runs throughout, the author has not permitted this to rule out the more solid and learned matter which belongs to the subject.—*German Reformed Messenger.*

The interpretation given to the parable differs from the common one, but is entertained with much firmness by the author, and held by him to be of much importance. The Discourses are in a strain of earnest piety, and contain much interesting matter, both in the line of exegesis, and of practical observations; and we can recommend the book as one profitable to read and examine. Careful and discriminating attention to the author's views and the arguments by which he supports them, will give one a larger knowledge of Scriptural interpretation and enable him to fix more exactly and hold more firmly the precise doctrine of the New Testament on the subject of Christ's second appearing.—*Boston Recorder.*

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Dr. Seiss, of the Lutheran Church in this city, has won for himself an honorable and a deserved reputation as a fervid and elegant preacher and writer; as a diligent student of the Word, and of ancient and modern biblical literature; and as a man of devout and evangelical spirit. These characteristics appear in his recently published volume of *Discourses on the Parable of the Ten Virgins,* which is a most readable and, in the main, highly profitable work. His views involve the doctrine of the literal second coming. . . . A sermon on the "Judgeship of the Saints" is added. It is doubtless true that the clergy generally pay too little attention to the eschatology of the Scriptures as an effective element of preaching. Dr. Seiss' book is calculated to stir up their interest on the subject.—*American Presbyterian.*

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